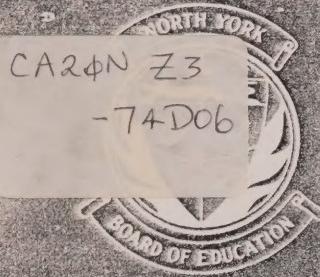


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RESEARCH REPORT

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Background studies on day care
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Publications



A SURVEY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS
OF THE JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMME



PATRICIA CRAWFORD

May, 1971

P R E F A C E

The three volume English Language Studies were established in three parts by the author in 1970, 1971, and 1972. The study groups have expanded each year since then, so that in September, 1979 there were over 1000 children studied.

The author would like to thank all of the Junior Kindergarten teachers for their co-operation in providing data for this study.

In addition, thanks are extended to Mrs. Erica Wright and Mrs. Lynne Brenner, of Educational Research Services for their assistance in establishing coding categories for the data and coding the teachers' responses.



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The first Junior Kindergarten classes were established in three North York schools in September, 1967. The programme has expanded each year since then, so that in September, 1970 there were Junior Kindergarten classes in twenty-five schools.

Why do we have Junior Kindergartens?

In the last decade, there has been increasing concern, not only in North York but across the North American continent, for the large numbers of children that come to the elementary schools, lacking what are considered to be the necessary basic cognitive and social skills. Overcrowding, apathetic attitudes toward school on the part of the parents, lack of books, poor or inadequate language models are all factors which have been identified as handicaps to a child who enters a school system which emphasizes continuing education based on the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Junior Kindergartens were established, therefore, in low income areas and in areas where English is a second language for more than 65% of the population, to facilitate the introduction of such children to the school system.

What kinds of learning experiences do children have in Junior Kindergarten?

This basic question provides the focus for this report.

Background of Study

During the fall and winter of 1970-71, A.E. Virgin and Patricia Crawford held several discussions with Mr. Frank Markovich, Inspector of Schools and Miss Mary Scanlan,

Assistant Co-ordinator, Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten Program regarding the effects of the Junior Kindergarten program. One outcome of these discussions was the decision to ask the Junior Kindergarten teachers what they perceive as being most important during the Junior Kindergarten year in terms of the specific nature and extent of learning.

Procedure

Each of the forty-one Junior Kindergarten teachers was asked to complete the following task:

Select six children from your class whom you feel have made the most significant learning gains since September. For each child list his sex and age and describe the specific nature and extent of the improvement. Use your daily notes and classroom observations during the week of March 8-12 as the basis for your comments.

In addition, the teachers were asked to indicate whether their school had been designated as an Inner City school or an English as a Second Language school.

Case Studies

The following case studies are presented as an illustration of the descriptive data provided by the teachers:

CHILD'S NAME: R.M.
SEX: Female. AGE: 4 yrs. 4 months.

R. is a happy rather shy child who has come to us from a very culturally deprived background. Because her mother can barely read or write, R. had missed so many of the childhood experiences such as the bedtime

story. Her world was so tiny and confined that she found school and its experiences almost overwhelming. She had been very babied at home and not allowed to develop even in her most basic skills. Her baby talk is slowly being overcome and she has learned to cope very independently in routines. Her vocabulary has been greatly broadened and she now is able to participate in our discussion and story groups. All our excursions have been very thrilling for her and R. is starting to appear as quite an independent and interesting child.

CHILD'S NAME: C.H.
SEX: M. AGE: 12-12-66.

Christopher was extremely immature when he began school. He sucked his thumb constantly and just couldn't seem to cope with many activities or other children. He would give up easily whenever he tried anything new and needed constant encouragement. It is hard to believe he is the same child now. He is so actively interested in all our activities and has matured considerably. He enters into all our conversations, expresses himself well and shows a good sense of humour. He has developed into a happy, well adjusted boy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Treatment of Data

In order to summarize such descriptive information, it was necessary to establish several categories in terms of the major areas of child improvement reported, and then to analyze each description in terms of the frequency of occurrence of these categories.

As the first step in establishing the coding categories, four members of the Research Department each read several questionnaires and wrote down those areas which were mentioned most frequently by the teachers as showing improvement. The members then pooled their results and

after some discussion agreed on a tentative set of categories.

The next step was to try analyzing several questionnaires. Working in pairs, each member of a pair scored a questionnaire and then shared his results with his partner. Any points of disagreement were resolved in a discussion with all four team members and the decision recorded. In this way, the limits of the coding categories were defined more specifically and complete agreement was reached among the team members regarding the kinds of behaviours to be included in each category.

For the final coding process, the team again worked in pairs, each member checking the coding of his partner.

Coding Categories

The behaviours listed by the teachers as having shown significant improvement since September fell into seven general areas:

1. Fluency in Speaking English

In September, he understood very little English; .. since then his use of the English language has progressed from the occasional word, to half English and half Italian sentences, to almost complete English.

J. had absolutely no knowledge of English in September.... During the week of March 8-12 it is evident that J's English is very fluent indeed. He has no trouble expressing himself.

M. was unable to speak any English when she started in September. Her vocabulary is still limited, although she is able to carry on a conversation with the teacher and the other children. She really tries to learn new words. Her development

in the English language has been most significant. She now speaks in simple sentences, is using new words and is beginning to understand our directions.

Her ability to pick up words and expressions from the other children has led to a great improvement in speaking English. She used a variety of words and now questions new words and expressions quite often.

2. Development of Learning Skills

This was a fairly broad category and included the development of academic learning skills such as counting and improved verbal skills; increased attention span, and listening skills; improved psychomotor development due to either physical maturation or overcoming a physical handicap; and increased interest in and enjoyment of a variety of activities and materials available in the Junior Kindergarten programme.

In the beginning he tended to ignore verbal directions... now he follows directions with a minimum of stalling.

He was able to sit and listen to stories; follow classroom routines.
His vocabulary is now quite extensive, he forms sentences very well.

Her span of attention has improved and she does not flit continually from one thing to another.

She is now able to give a complete story about her painting in almost fluent English.

Her vocabulary has improved from immature to average. She uses simple sentences but is well able to put her point across.

There has been much improvement in her ability to listen to and follow directions.

She seems to gain a great deal of information from audio-visual sources, record players, T.V. Recently is doing her own name and is recognizing other letters and numbers spontaneously.

She now knows her colours and is beginning to rote count.

Speech patterns have become much more mature; listens well, interprets ideas and contributes his own; attention span greatly increased.

Inability to concentrate, now concentrates and can therefore complete her activities.

She can now express herself coherently.

Has learned all of his colours, has a good understanding of number relations and can count to 15.

Co-ordination of large muscles improved with use of large blocks bicycles. He is surer on his feet and far more confident in gym.

Muscle co-ordination vastly improved - can now manipulate very small objects in cut and paste. Very adept in manipulating the tricycle and in performing difficult manoeuvres on the monkey bars.

He was reluctant to do physical activities and rhythms because of a lame foot. He now climbs, runs and seems unconscious of his handicap.

S. has a speech impediment and initially it was difficult for us to understand him. He has had speech therapy and is improving in this area. He can express his ideas much more clearly.

She now enjoys painting, picture making, play in the Doll Centre.

He has developed an interest in stories and records.

She is lately very inquisitive about her environment. She is very interested in music, participates well, dramatizes, often will reproduce familiar tunes or create songs of her own spontaneously throughout the day.

He is now interested in all activities, especially our gym program. He is keenly interested in books and story time.

When D first came to Junior Kindergarten he played only with the blocks and trucks. He is now one of the most enthusiastic children in the kindergarten. He has a very inquisitive mind and enjoys all of our activities.

Greater interest in expressing ideas through various art mediums is evident. Realistic symbols and detail are beginning to appear after a manipulative stage of development.

3. Development of Social Skills

Frequently children who enter the Junior Kindergarten program are very shy and so do not talk to or play with the other children or the teacher. Others have had little previous contact or interaction with other children and are unwilling or unable to co-operate with the other children or participate in group activities.

M. was extremely shy with adults. He followed me around for almost a month without saying one word.... Gradually he began talking to the other children. In the last month he has become far more sociable with both children and adults.

J. has become more verbal and likes to discuss and answer questions.

For the first month or two, he played mainly alone or in parallel play. He began to play for short periods with one or two children in a give and take relationship and now has established friendship with two boys.

D. was an extremely shy child who sat or stood by himself not participating in any activities.. now he will join a group to play.

He is just now approaching his classmates to initiate play situations and he is really thrilled with the results.

She was shy and withdrawn when she started kindergarten. She wandered and observed the others playing. She has overcome her shyness and plays imaginatively with the other children.

Most important, he can now play with the other children with mutual satisfaction. He is learning to share.

He rarely participated in a small group situation... J's behaviour has gradually improved. He will participate in a small group situation and has learned to share and co-operate.

She would never join any group activity but now enjoys taking the lead and will sing her own songs.

In the beginning, S. had difficulty coping with the programme. She could not take turns, share equipment or join in games or stories. She can now join in all our activities and can use toys and equipment constructively.

When J. first came to Junior Kindergarten he was afraid of his peers, teacher and any adult who came near him. Although J. is still a very sensitive boy, he is taking part in activities with other children and obviously is enjoying his association with them.

4. Self Confidence

M. spoke no English at all in September and appeared very unhappy. His English has improved and along with it, his self confidence. He is a happy youngster who seems to enjoy school.

Her world had been so small that every experience at school has been greeted by wonder and enthusiasm. She has gained confidence in herself.

J. needs a great deal of praise and attention to give him confidence in himself. He receives so little attention at home that he has no concept of himself as an individual with capabilities and ideas of his own. This is a very difficult process and it is taking daily successes and praise to help J.

(With her improvement in English) M. has gained confidence in herself and in adults - she is trying to teach us Italian!

In September, H. found difficulty in self-direction and expressing herself. She is now completely self motivated even to the extent that she knows what she is going to do before entering the room.

It took Paul a long time to feel secure among 40 children, however in the past couple of months he has begun to play with a variety of children and approaches us freely without hesitation.

She appeared tense and nervous. Gradually her attitude toward school became more positive, she is more relaxed and is developing a more positive image of herself - she is very pleased with her successes.

5. Independence

He appeared to be helpless when getting dressed, and seemed to expect things to be done for him. He gradually learned that he could manage most of the job himself.

H. & M. are identical twins and neither teachers nor children can distinguish between them. The most important thing the boys have learned is to become much less dependent on each other so that their difference in personality can emerge and their individual self images can develop.

Since he is the youngest in the family, he was extremely dependent and irresponsible. He wants and loves to be mothered. He has begun to dress himself, put his things away, and to follow directions - to think for himself.

She initiates her own activities and is not hesitant to speak when she needs help.

Initially, H. could not cope with the simplest of routines. He is now able to choose different activities on his own.

6. Behaviour Problems

This category includes two types of behaviour, direct aggression, e.g. fighting, hitting, and emotional outbursts, e.g. temper tantrums, crying.

Her behaviour was very aggressive the first few months, but she has learned to play and act in a socially acceptable manner with her peers.

In September - sulking, screaming, lying, fighting with others. In March, still aggressive but is more willing to allow other children in class to set her limits - more co-operative.

When he decided he wanted something he punched the person who had it and tried to take it by force. Now C. can play games organized by other children without being aggressive.

J. was aggressive and willful and relatively uncontrolled at the beginning of the year. He has become much more cooperative and settled and has learned to give and take more readily.

A. entered school in September an extremely boisterous and verbose child lacking in all self control. He needed continuous guidance in order to follow routines but is showing much more evidence of self control.

Temper tantrums have disappeared.

Initially refused to accept any limits on her behaviour. Now accepts rules and routines within the class and has begun to use them to her best advantage.

She has a very forceful personality and demanded a lot of attention from everyone. When she didn't get her own way she would throw temper tantrums, cry and pout. She still has her moments when she is unwilling to share. However, on the whole she has shown great improvement in her attitudes toward the other children and our program.

In September S. was very unsure of herself and others; she never entered the room willingly and displayed extreme reactions (tantrums) when I attempted to approach her and talk to her. Gradually the duration of her tantrums shortened until finally she was able to enter the room with self-control. She is now eager to come to school and she especially enjoys trying new things.

7. Value of Junior Kindergarten

As several teachers included comments in their descriptions regarding the value of Junior Kindergarten beyond the limits of the classroom setting, we thought it important to provide a separate category for such statements.

The teacher called in school nurse who made a home visit and suggested a visit to family doctor. As a result of further consultations J. has been found to have a serious hearing loss and he needs special speech therapy. If not for Junior Kindergarten would this problem have gone on for another year? Improvement is slow in this case. His whole attitude changes when he is involved and loved.

After interviews with his parents, there is a new awareness on their part of the need for toys and story books to stimulate imagination and provide a background for skills which are to follow.

M. is culturally deprived and he has benefitted greatly from general experiences of school.

I think this discipline problem left for one more year would have been far harder to correct, consequently his intellectual learning would have been harmed.

A. has had a very major experience in coming to Junior Kindergarten. She has socialized with children her age for the first time in her life.

Analysis of Data

Data were available for 109 boys and 86 girls. The frequency of occurrence of each of the seven categories was totalled and the results, in terms of percentages, are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Percent of Behaviours falling in each of seven categories as reported by the total sample of teachers. (N=33)

	Fluency in English	Learning Skills	Social Skills	Self Confidence	Independence	Behaviour Problems	Value of Junior Kindergarten	
MALES	7.03	30.90	33.17	9.30	7.54	9.30	2.76	100.0%
FEMALES	9.18	32.46	32.79	9.51	8.52	4.59	2.95	100.0%
	7.97	31.58	33.00	9.39	7.97	7.25	2.84	100.0%

It is evident that for both boys and girls, teachers reported the largest percentage of improvement in the areas of social skills (i.e. 33%) and learning skills (i.e. 31%). The remaining categorires, except for "Value of Junior Kindergarten", were mentioned approximately equally often, i.e. approximately 8%.

There was little difference in the patterns reported for boys and girls except in the case of "Behaviour Problems", where boys were noted as having shown improvement about twice as often as girls.

To determine whether the patterns for Inner City schools differed from those of either English as a Second Language schools or schools who have not received either of these designations, separate tallies were made. These results are presented in Tables 2, 3 & 4 respectively.

TABLE 2

Percent of Behaviours falling in each of seven categories as reported by teachers in the Inner City Schools. (N=10).

	Fluency in English	Learning Skills	Social Skills	Self Confidence	Independence	Behaviour Problems	Value of Junior Kindergarten	
MALES	2.17	39.85	31.16	8.69	7.25	7.97	2.90	99.99%
FEMALES	5.00	40.00	31.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	3.00	100.00%
	3.56	39.91	31.09	7.98	7.14	7.56	2.94	99.98%

TABLE 3

Percent of Behaviours falling in each of seven categories as reported by teachers in the English as a Second Language Schools. (N=13)

	Fluency in English	Learning Skills	Social Skills	Self Confidence	Independence	Behaviour Problems	Value of Junior Kindergarten	
MALES	10.96	23.29	37.67	7.53	8.22	8.90	3.42	99.99%
FEMALES	15.38	26.92	34.61	8.65	9.61	2.88	1.92	99.97%
	12.80	24.80	36.40	8.00	8.80	6.40	2.80	100.00%

TABLE 4

Percent of Behaviours falling in each of seven categories as reported by teachers in the schools not designated as either Inner City or E.S.L. (N=10)

	Fluency in English	Learning Skills	Social Skills	Self Confidence	Independence	Behaviour Problems	Value of Junior Kindergarten	
MALES	7.89	29.82	29.82	12.28	7.02	11.40	1.75	99.98%
FEMALES	6.93	30.69	32.67	12.87	8.91	3.96	3.96	99.98%
	7.44	30.23	31.16	12.56	7.91	7.91	2.79	100.00%

As was the case with the total group, teachers in each of the three types of schools generally tended to emphasize social and learning skills approximately two-thirds of the time. However, although these two categories occurred most frequently, the degree of emphasis on each category was slightly different in the Inner City schools as opposed to the E.S.L. schools. In the Inner City schools, 39% of the behaviours reported as having improved were in the area of learning skills, whereas in the E.S.L. schools, only 25% of the behaviours fell in this category. In terms of social skills, 36% of the E.S.L. teachers' reports were in this category as opposed to 31% in the Inner City schools.

The other major difference between Inner City and E.S.L. schools relates to Category 1, "Fluency in English"; as one would have expected, a much larger percent of the E.S.L. data (i.e. 13%) falls in this category as compared to the Inner City schools (i.e. 3%).

In Table 4, it should be noted that 12.5% of the students were reported as having increased self-confidence as opposed to approximately 8% in both Inner City and E.S.L. schools.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the data reported in this paper, it is evident that during the Junior Kindergarten year, children are showing improvement in those areas which are important to their success in the school years which follow.

